

October 16, 2001

THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP ACT

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, Sonoma County, which I represent, as well as Stanislaus County in California, currently face a potential crisis in their mental health communities. In order for these County staffed inpatient psychiatric units to keep their Medicare provider status, under last year's HCFA rule, the hospitals would have to take over employment of County health care workers who currently provide the psychiatric care. Today I am introducing legislation that will enable the hospitals to keep their Medicare provider status while allowing the health care workers to remain County employees. This is an avenue the counties and hospitals currently don't have under the HCFA rules. Under my bill, everyone wins: County employees keep their job status, the hospitals retain their Medicare provider status, and Medicare patients will continue to receive the high quality treatment that they deserve.

This predicament began when the agency formerly known as the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) issued the Provider-Based Rules (PBR) as part of the "Outpatient Prospective Payment System" final rule last year. The regulations were issued in an attempt to curb abuses and manipulation in the Medicare reimbursement system. However, it created an unintended consequence for my constituents.

The concept behind the PBR was to regulate hospital acquisitions of off-site physicians' offices to ensure these outpatient sites were sufficiently integrated with a hospital in order to receive the higher cost-based reimbursement available only to hospitals. HCFA's rule also stated that this applied to inpatient services. In effect, the PBR prohibits management companies from employing the health care workers who provide the care at its inpatient hospital units. While this may seem reasonable on the surface, this employment requirement presents a serious problem that HCFA did not intend when it issued the PBR. In the case of Sonoma and Stanislaus counties, the counties employ both the management staff and the health care workers at local Sutter hospitals' inpatient psychiatric units. In my district, Sonoma County currently manages and employs the staff at the former Oakcrest psychiatric unit (now the "Norton Center") through a contract with Sutter Medical Center of Santa Rosa. Preserving this management contract arrangement between Sutter and the County is critical because current County health care workers have the necessary expertise to deliver this specialized type of care to patients. My bill will allow this type of public-private management contract arrangement to continue without threatening a hospital's Medicare provider status.

In accordance with the PBR, the Norton Center can meet the seven requirements that demonstrate it is an integrated part of the Hospital. However, it cannot meet HCFA's additional requirements for entities operating

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through management contracts. Unless it can comply with all the regulations, the Norton Center will not receive any reimbursement under the Medicare and Medicaid programs. If the Norton Center has to forfeit its role as a Medicare and Medicaid provider, it may have to stop providing services altogether since it serves a high percentage of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. HCFA's recommendation is that entities in violation of the management contract requirements just employ the County health care workers directly. This is not a realistic remedy for Sonoma County because it would result in the termination of approximately 60 County employees. That's why I am pleased to offer the "Mental Health Community Partnership Act," because I agree that the regulations were never intended to eliminate this form of public-private management contract arrangements or threaten access to essential health care services. Specifically, this bill allows a hospital to contract with a public entity to provide inpatient psychiatric services, if the health facility is operated or managed by a state or local government. It's a win-win for everyone because it preserves the rule's original goal to curb Medicare abuse, the Norton Center will keep its Medicare provider status, County workers will keep their job status, and Medicare and Medicaid patients will continue to enjoy access to inpatient psychiatric services. Congress should take this opportunity to protect quality jobs and provide access to comprehensive health care for our most needy.

HONORING JERRY POOLE ON HIS
RECEPTION OF THE DOROTHY
RICHARDSON AWARD FOR RESIDENT
LEADERSHIP

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding member of the New Haven, Connecticut community and my dear friend, Jerry Poole. Jerry was recently honored here in Washington by the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation with the Dorothy Richardson Award for Resident Leadership.

Dorothy Richardson emerged as a community resident leader in the mid-1960s in response to an urban renewal effort that threatened her neighborhood. Her diligent work with lenders city officials, foundation heads, community organizers, and her neighbors served as the vehicle to improve her neighborhood's housing stock. She later founded the first Neighborhood Housing Service in Pittsburgh and served as a model for the development of NHS partnerships across the nation. Each year the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation honors individuals who reflect the character and spirit of Dorothy Richardson. Jerry is one of only nine selected from thousands of volunteers in the 1,800 communities across the country served by the NeighborWorks network of nonprofit organizations for this prestigious national recognition.

Jerry has been the Executive Director of New Haven's Opportunities Industrialization

Centers of America for the last fifteen years. He has dedicated his professional career to ensuring that the unemployed find work. His incredible dedication has opened up employment opportunities for thousands throughout Greater New Haven. In addition to his professional career, Jerry has spent innumerable hours working with his neighbors and community leaders to change the face of the West River neighborhood—giving residents a renewed sense of pride and hope in this community.

A dynamic neighborhood leader, Jerry's vision and tenacity has not only made a real difference in the West River Neighborhood but across the State of Connecticut. It was only eight short years ago that he joined the West River Neighborhood Association, a group of residents dedicated to improving their community. When they first started, the Association was a group of neighbors who met regularly at each others homes and never had much more than one hundred dollars in their checking account. Based on Jerry's simple belief that residents should give ten percent of their time to their neighbors, the group developed a strategic plan that is now coming to fruition. Under his leadership, the West River Neighborhood Association focused their attention on an ambitious plan. Partnering with the City of New Haven and the Mutual Housing Association of Southern Connecticut, the group worked hard on plans for the West River Memorial Park and to rehabilitate housing along George Street—a section of their neighborhood that had lacked attention for years. I had the opportunity to work closely with Jerry and his group to bring federal funding to the West River Memorial Park project and earlier this year, the West River neighborhood Association joined Mutual housing in breaking ground on a \$1.3 million rehabilitation project on blighted properties.

The commitment and dedication Jerry has shown to our community and to the State of Connecticut is unquestionable. His advocacy and strong voice have gone a long way in enriching the lives of his neighbors and their families. I am honored to stand today to join with his wife, Joyce, daughter, Summerleigh, family, friends, and the New Haven community in congratulating Jerry Poole on this very special occasion.

HONORING KAREN MATHEWS'
RETIREMENT

HON. GARY A. CONDIT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Karen Mathews on the occasion of her retirement.

First elected Stanislaus County Clerk-Recorder in 1990, her retirement on September 30, 2001, capped a 17-year career of dedicated public service. Perhaps most compelling is the price she paid for that public service.

In 1994, tax protesters assaulted Karen in her home because of her refusal to file fraudulent tax liens against local officials. Earlier, she had been subjected to repeated threats of violence but not once, for one moment, did she succumb to these threats.

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